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COSTA RICA

PRESIDENT FIGUERES' STATEMENTS AT PRESS CONFERENCE

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The President of the Republic, Don Jose Figueres, spoke yesterday with great enthusiasm of the "peace year" celebrations. Figueres has also alluded to this year on other occasions as one of pardon and forgetfulness.

Figueres visited the College of Journalism, where the Thursday press conference was held.

The main theme was what the president called "the peace year celebrations" in Costa Rica. He stated that "these celebrations will calm emotions in our country."

Figueres explained: next 11 April there will be a parade of a thousand vehicles from Santa Maria de Dota to Cartago. Figueres said that it will be a "phantom march of the war of '48.

He indicated also that there is a possibility that on 18 April there will be a Te Deum in the cathedral. This will require an application for a permit.

The president stressed that "these celebrations will be apolitical. I hope that all political parties will attend."

Decree

Figueres announced that in a few days a decree will be issued which will stipulate what the "peace year" is. "I am not being prompted by any political motive in this connection. The general idea is that the generations of '48 must not hand down to the present ones a divided Costa Rica. Hatred must not pass from generation to generation." He stated that, since "25 years have gone by -- a quarter of a century -- since those deeds.

There will be a celebration of special events in those historical places where major battles took place. We will do everything in a respectful manner. There will be no exaltation of victors over vanquished."

He said that "many who belong to the pro-Calderon party have promised to attend, though others have said 'no,' because that would compromise them politically, an opinion which I do not share."

"En La Lucha there already is a monument dedicated to the fallen of both factions."

Concerning this matter, he said finally, "I am calling on all Costa Ricans to attend the national celebrations, since 25 years have passed since those deeds."

Vesco

He was questioned about Robert Vesco and the investigation that is taking place in the legislative assembly. He said that "the government has nothing to do with this."

Concerning the judgment that is being brought against Vesco in the United States, he said that "it will be necessary to wait for a decision. The debtor institutions of Costa Rica will continue being such whoever the creditor is. We do not fear any investigation." Figueres said that "this is all an internal matter, a local desire to attack the government."

Mc Alpin

He was asked about the case of Gordon McAlpin, who was declared "persona non grata" a year ago and who was not permitted to enter the country. Now the legislative committee wants him to come.

Figueres simply said, "I am not very well informed on this matter."

Concerning Clovis McAlpin, who has invested several millions in cattle raising in Costa Rica, he said that "he is an investor. He is now in Europe trying to sell meat. He called me from Paris and Stockholm yesterday."

Capital

He again referred to the capital that has come into the country. "Let capital come from abroad. In the United States they are objecting because capital is coming here, but they did not say anything when our capital went there."

Assassinations

The assassination of the Kennedy brothers, John F. and Robert Kennedy, and of Martin Luther King entered the conversation.

"They were assassinated by lunatics. They are infamous people; that is, they wanted fame, publicity. They are mentally sick."

He spoke of the burning [bombing] of the capitol in the United States. "The man who did it wanted to go down in history -- to have fame. But they declared him infamous."

Milk

The president did not want to go into a thorough discussion of the matter of milk and the possibility of a price increase, but he proposed a special meeting of the journalists, possibly this coming week, for the sole discussion of the milk problem in Costa Rica.

"I am concerned about this matter and if steps are not taken soon, there will be no milk." He said, "I have not denied, and I do not deny, that the price of milk has been raised during this administration."

Other Topics

He was happy about the resumption of trade relations with Honduras."

He reiterated that "it is necessary to restrict the consumption of non-essentials, but it is not necessary to restrict credits."

"I have the impression that the matter of the fiscal deficit is improving, but it will be necessary to carefully observe the situation for a longer period, in order to have a more complete picture."

Governmental debts were mentioned to him and he said that, "as I view the country, there are many persons and firms that are making progress. Unemployment is decreasing. Business is prospering. But there are always isolated groups. My concern is for those homes that have an income of less than 1,200 colones per month."

Concerning politicians he said, "I wish that responsible opposition politicians would appear, but that is very difficult." He did not wish to comment on the matter of whether or not there is a shortage of taxis at this time, but he said he would study the matter.

Good Impression

"This place has made a good impression on me," he said after going through the facilities of the College of Journalism in the upper part of a building that is 75 varas [a vara = about 2.8 feet] south of the Balmoral hotel. The president of the college, Rolando Angulo, gave him explanations and accompanied him on the tour. The president stayed a while in the modest library and became interested in some books.

"It is necessary to look for that decree," he said, when Angulo told him that in 1831 Costa Rica prohibited the publication of books. And he showed him a Guatemalan decree which referred to its issuance in Costa Rica and which voided it.

Angulo thanked the president for his visit and invited him to two functions to be held during press week, from the 8th to the 24th of this month. The invitations were 19 March, when journalism degrees will be conferred in the National Theater and for the gala press ball at the Union Club on Saturday, the 24th.

The President of the Republic accepted both invitations "with great pleasure."

Main Avenue

Coffee was served, after which the president walked with the journalists to the main avenue.

At the corner of the Balmoral he chatted with people and became very much interested in the intense motor vehicle traffic.

Figueres had an English Jaguar on trial yesterday. It was parked on the main avenue. A Mercedes Benz, with number plates 8567, passed by and struck it from behind. The president

said that "it has not been taken out yet and already it has been struck."

A great crowd gathered on the corner and the president was on the point of being run over by an automobile when he tried to cross the street.

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